

DDI-551-74

26 FEB 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Replacement of Skills Lost Through Retirement of
FBIS Personnel

REFERENCE : Your memo, same subject, dtd 7 Feb 74

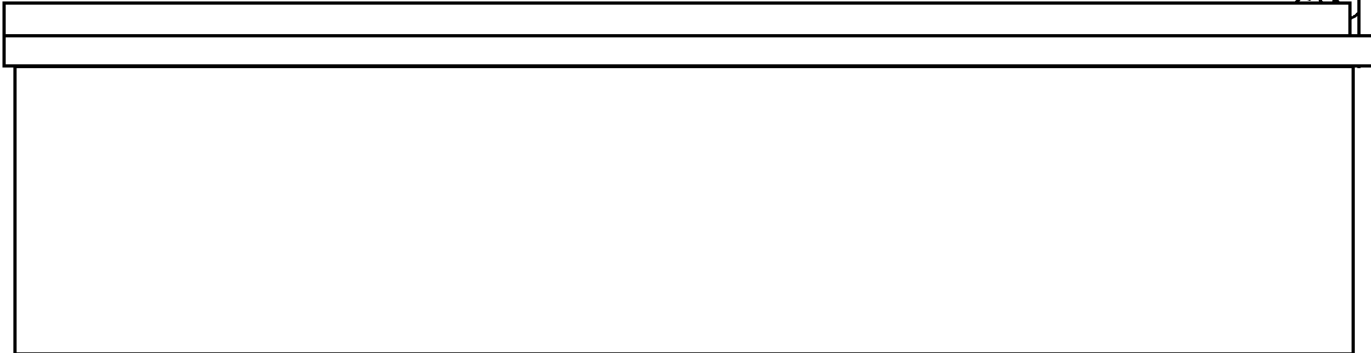
1. Background - Before responding directly to your questions, it may be useful to review briefly the nature of the tasks performed by FBIS Staff linguists and the factors which make maintenance of high and native skills so critical. As you know, the FBIS linguist performs a divided duty. First, he is responsible for the greater part of the world-wide press monitoring activity carried out by FBIS, screening newspapers and periodicals for information which responds to intelligence requirements and either translating it himself or sending it to JPRS for translation by Independent Contractors. Secondly, he is required to provide translation services to other Agency offices and to other USIB components as appropriate.

2. In the belief that a language unused will atrophy, and also in the interests of cost/effectiveness, linguists are instructed not to send press items of 500 words or less to JPRS but to translate them themselves. Much of this material, particularly in the active economic and scientific/technical areas, requires familiarity with specialized vocabularies, not only for direct translation purposes but also to verify the accuracy of the work performed by the contractors in JPRS. Moreover, since language is a living thing, constantly changing, the linguist must be continually learning as he goes. Modern Japanese is changing by the hour with the introduction of new technical and economic terms. So is modern Hebrew. The fledgling linguist, no matter how well he may have been prepared by his college, is utterly unprepared to handle the jargon which has become the basic language of the East German press, or to correctly interpret the subtle and shifting turns of phrase used in the Mainland China press. In the press exploitation program the linguist need not be "native" in all aspects of his language (read, write, speak and understand) but his reading skills must be very high indeed.

3. In the area of language support the problem deepens. FBIS provides each year an average of 33 man-years of staff language support to other Agency components including [REDACTED] 25X1
among others. [REDACTED] 25X1

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4. In both the press and language support areas, in addition to his own daily language work, the veteran, native-skilled linguist is indispensable in helping to deepen and refine the language talents of younger employees, and in introducing them to the art and discipline of translation. Foreign language knowledge and the ability to translate are by no means identical gifts; a person may be greatly conversant with a foreign tongue and yet be incapable of moving coherently and idiomatically from the linguistic forms of that language into those of English.

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